

## **The Message of Hebrews**

### **Posted by Bob Young**

[Note: The idea for this post came from the introduction of the volume on Hebrews in the NICNT (F.F. Bruce), and borrows both format and at times wording.]

1:1-14

God spoke in various ways to our fathers through the prophets in times past, but now He has spoken His final word to us in His Son, His perfect representative. The Son of God is greater than any prophet; he is even greater than the angels, as the ancient Scriptures clearly testify.

2:1-18

Consider: it was through angels that Moses' law was communicated, and its sanctions were very severe; how much more perilous is it to ignore the saving message brought not by angels, but by Jesus, the Son of God, Lord.

Jesus, the Son of God, is the One to whom the dominion of the world has been committed for all time to come. This is how it happened. Psalm 8 teaches that God put everything under the dominion of human beings, so it was the human nature that this Son of God had to take upon Himself in order to win back the dominion that was lost through sin. To do this He had to conquer the devil who had falsely usurped it, and he had to rescue those who were held in bondage to this false power. He conquered the devil when He invaded the realm of death through his own death. The devil had controlled death until then, but Jesus overpowered death, and thereby overpowered Satan. Because Jesus took the form of human beings, he is qualified to serve as high priest on behalf of mankind; he knows all the trials from his own experiences and can give timely help to meet human needs.

3:1-4:13

Beware: those who rebelled against God during the wilderness wanderings were excluded from rest in the Promised Land. There is an even better rest than that which the Israelites were given in Canaan. That better rest awaits God's people. We must take care not to forfeit this rest by rebelling against God when He speaks to us, not through his servant Moses as he did in those days, but through His Son, who is greater than Moses.

4:14-6:12

As already said, Jesus is a great high priest who is able to sympathize with and help his people. He has been called to his high-priestly office by God Himself, in the order of Melchizedek, as is made clear in inspired Scripture.

(I would like to say more about this subject, but I do not think I can because of your spiritual immaturity. I urge you to move beyond the basics. I warn you that those who have tasted the blessings of the new age can never be brought back, if after falling they continue to reject and disgrace God's Son. Not that I think you are considering such; I have a better hope for you than that. Press on; reach for maturity rather than getting stuck or slipping back.)

6:13-7:28

Christ is divinely appointed a high priest of Melchizedek's order. You remember the story. God made a promise to Abraham and confirmed it with an oath, so it was doubly certain—because God said it and cannot lie, and because God sealed it with an oath. We have this same hope, based on God's promise, which is still valid.

You remember the story. Melchizedek appears without antecedent, and nothing more is said afterward. He was a very great man; our father Abraham paid him tithes and received his blessing. You might even say that Levi, ancestor of the priestly families of Israel, paid Melchizedek tithes in the person of Abraham. This implies that Melchizedek is greater than Levi, and Melchizedek's priesthood greater than Aaron's. If perfect, complete access to God had been attained under the Aaronic priesthood, why would God have acclaimed the Messiah as priest according to a different order later?

Jesus' priesthood is superior to Aaron's in many ways. First, Jesus was confirmed to the office by the oath of God. Second, Jesus is immortal whereas Aaronic priests died. Jesus is sinless; the priests of Aaron's line had to present a personal sin-offering to cleanse them before presenting the offering for the people. Jesus' sacrifice was thus singular and did not have to be repeated whereas the Aaronic priestly service was continual. The result of Jesus' sacrifice was a better hope by which we draw near to God.

#### 8:1-10:18

Jesus is the high priest and mediator of a new and better covenant, for he is continually before God, seated at his right hand, serving in the true sanctuary of the true dwelling of God. The introduction of a new covenant means the former one is obsolete, for the former system was copy and shadow of heavenly realities. The old covenant provided for the removal of external pollution through animal sacrifices and various rites, but could never remove sin. The way to full access to the Most Holy Place was not clear under the old order. The blood of Jesus, an acceptable once-for-all sacrifice, cleanses the conscience from guilt and thus abolishes the barrier between people and God. In the heavenly sanctuary there is no barrier (such as the curtain in the old covenant); direct access to God is available through Jesus in a spiritual, eternal order of which the earthly sanctuary was only temporary and inadequate copy.

#### 10:19-12:3

Since we can now enter the Most Holy Place, into the very presence of God, by a new and living way through the blood of Jesus, we should abandon the old obsolescent order. Let us maintain hope and faith, firmly assured of eternal realities that are invisible. We look forward with eager expectation, with the same forward-looking faith of earlier saints who gained God's approval. They lived awaiting the fulfillment of promises that have become reality in our day. Let us follow their example; better yet, follow the example of Jesus, pursuing God faithfully.

#### 12:4-13:25

Let us not grow faint-hearted in our trials; these are proof that we are sons of God. Our heritage in this age of fulfillment is glorious, far surpassing what happened in days gone by under the first covenant. How can we consider going back? Maintain your confession in faith and patience, imitating those who went before, and depending on God who raised Jesus from the dead.